

Message Text

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TO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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NODIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION TO SECSTATE FEB 09, 1976 FROM LUSAKA

QUOTE S E C R E T LUSAKA 0327

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO CAPE TOWN, DAR ES SALAAM, KINSHASA,
LAGOS, MOSCOW, AND LONDON FOR AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, AO

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA

1. SUMMARY. UNITA EXTERNAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY JORGE SANGUMBA BELIEVES
IT IS SOVIETS WHO HAVE MADE "PEACE OVERTURE" TO BRITISH TO INTERCEDE
WITH NIGERIANS MAINLY, BUT ALSO WITH TANZANIANS, TO TRY INFLUENCE
MPLA'S NETO TOWARD SOME SORT OF COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA.
ACTUALLY BRITISH HERE TELL US OVERTURE ORIGINATES WITH HMG

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ACTING ON SIGNALS THEY SEE IN PRAVDA LINE. SANGUMBA VERY SKEPTICAL

THAT EITHER MUHAMMAD OR NYERERE HAVE SUFFICIENT INFLUENCE ON NETO AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS WHOM SANGUMBA AGREES REMAIN ADAMANT ON ACHIEVING MILITARY, NOT POLITICAL, SOLUTION. SANGUMBA INDICATED THAT WHILE NO CONTACTS BETWEEN MPLA AND UNITA HAVE TAKEN PLACE, LATTER WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO AND NOT TURN DOWN MPLA APPROACH. SAID INCLUSION OF FNLA IN SUCH TALKS WOULD DEPEND PRIMARILY UPON MOBUTU THINKING WHICH UNDERGOING SOME REVISION FROM EARLIER SENTIMENTAL ATTACHMENT TO HOLDEN ROBERTO. IMPRESSION SANGUMBA LEFT WITH US IS THAT UNITA COULD DO A DEAL WITH MPLA BUT IS DOUBTFUL THAT LATTER NOW DISPOSED TO ONE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CALL BY SANGUMBA AT EMBASSY ON ANOTHER MATTER AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 6, WE SOLICITED HIS COMMENTS ON CURRENT SPATE OF REPORTS THAT UNITA AND MPLA MIGHT BE ABLE TO COME TOGETHER TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA. SANGUMBA DENIED THERE HAVE BEEN ANY SUCH CONTACTS TO DATE. WE GAVE SANGUMBA GIST OF SENATOR BARTLETT'S DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT IN LUANDA LAST WEEKEND (LISBON 727), NOTING THAT THREE SENIOR MPLA OFFICIALS WHOM SENATOR SAW HAD RULED OUT ANY POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY. SANGUMBA AGREED THAT THIS REMAINS HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING OF POSITION TAKEN BY NETO AND OF MOST SENIOR MPLA LEADERS. HE MENTIONED ONE OR TWO, SPECIFICALLY PRA PRIMIN NASCIMENTO AND MIN JUSTICE BOAVIDA, WHO HE SAID MIGHT FAVOR COMPROMISE BUT ADDED THAT THEY ARE IN MINORITY AND HAVE NO EFFECTIVE VOICE SO LONG AS WAR CONTINUES GOING IN MPLA'S FAVOR.

3. SANGUMBA SAID THAT WHILE IN LONDON LAST WEEK HE HAD BEEN SUMMONED FROM HIS HOTEL TO WHITEHALL TO BE INFORMED BY FONOFF OFFICIAL (REID) OF DIRECT SOVIET "PEACE OVERTURE" TO BRITISH ALONG LINES THAT MOSCOW COULD WELCOME "CONSOLIDATION IN ANGOLA OF ALL PATRIOTIC FORCES." SANGUMBA SAID HE AT LOSS UNDERSTAND JUST EXACTLY WHAT SOVIETS MIGHT MEAN BY THESE PHRASES. SAID HE AWARE OF UK INTENTIONS (WHICH SANGUMBA BELIEVED STEM FROM SOVIET INITIATIVE) TO CONTACT NIGERIANS TO URGE THEY WORK ON NETO TO INFLUENCE HIM IN DIRECTION OF OPENING TALKS WITH UNITA AND OF SUBSEQUENT NIGERIAN MISSION TO LUANDA (LAGOS 1514). HOWEVER, SANGUMBA IS SKEPTICAL THAT NIGERIANS HAVE THAT SORT OF CLOUT WITH NETO OR EVEN THAT PRESIDENT NYERERE, WHO HAS ALSO BEEN TALKING RECENTLY ABOUT A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA (DAR 407 AND 413),

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COULD DO MUCH TO BUDGE NETO. PRESSED FOR HIS VIEWS AS TO WHO MIGHT HOLD KEY TO NETO, SANGUMBA PROMPTLY SAID THERE ONLY ONE AFRICAN LEADER WHO HAD REAL INFLUENCE WITH NETO AND THAT IS CONGO'S NGOUABI. LATTER'S PERSONAL, POLITICAL, AND IDEOLOGICAL TIES WITH NETO GO BACK TO EARLY 1960S AND IT WAS NGOUABI WHO GAVE MPLA AN EXTERNAL PRE-INDEPENDENCE BASE IN CONGO.

4. SANGUMBA CONFIRMED THAT NO CONTACTS BETWEEN UNITA AND MPLA

HAVE YET TAKEN PLACE. CONTRARY TO WHAT SAVIMBI, SPEAKING IN ROBERTO'S PRESENCE, HAD TOLD SENATOR BARTLETT AND AMBASSADOR CUTLER IN KINSHASA (KINSHASA 1046 -NOTAL) ABOUT NOT MAKING ANY SEPARATE DEALS WITH MPLA, SANGUMBA INDICATED THAT UNITA'S REAL POSITION MAY BE MORE FLEXIBLE ON BASIS OF POLITBURO DECISION SOME WEEKS AGO. UNITA WOULD PREFER TRIPARTITE COALITION AND WOULD CERTAINLY PRESS INITIALLY FOR INCLUSION OF FNLA BUT HOW HARD UNITA WOULD PUSH WILL DEPEND UPON PRESIDENT MOBUTU. SANGUMBA SUGGESTED THAT WITH FNLA BECOMING SPENT FORCE AND MOBUTU TALKING ABOUT DECLINING SENTIMENTAL ATTACHMENTS TO ROBERTO, ZAIRE MAY BECOME LESS INCLINED INSIST UPON FNLA'S INCLUSION IN ANY UNITA TALKS WITH MPLA. IN THAT CASE UNITA WOULD SEEK ON ITS OWN TO WORK OUT ARRANGEMENT WITH MPLA EVEN IF THAT MEANT EXCLUSION OF FNLA.

5. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTION, SANGUMBA SAID UNITA WOULD SEEK COALITION GOVERNMENT BUT NOT PARTITION OF ANGOLA. PARTITION WOULD NOT ONLY BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO ALL ANGOLANS AND TO MOST AFRICANS BUT WOULD CREATE SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS FOR UNITA, SEVERAL OF WHOSE SENIOR LEADERS ARE CABINDANS. LATTER, SANGUMBA SAID, WOULD RESIST STRONGLY A SOLUTION THAT CUT THEM OFF FROM THEIR POLITICAL BASE AND PERSONAL TIES.

6. IN CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 7, BRITISH HICOM MILES TOLD ME QUITE DEFINITELY THAT HMG HAS READ SIGNAL INTO PRAVDA LINE ON CONSOLIDATION OF ALL PATRIOTIC FORCES IN ANGOLA AS MEANING SOVIETS COULD BE WILLING TO MAKE ROOM FOR OTHERS RATHER THAN BE CRITICIZED FOR PROMOTING AN ALL MPLA GOVERNMENT. BRITISH, FEELING THIS AVENUE WORTH EXPLORING, MADE OVERTURES TO NYERERE AND MUHAMMAD. BRITISH ENCOURAGED, MILES SAID, BY ALACRITY WITH WHICH NIGERIANS RESPONDED AND HAVE GONE TO WORK ON ISSUE IN LUANDA.

7. COMMENT: THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY SOME DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN SANGUMBA'S VERSION OF HIS TALKS WITH FONOFF IN LONDON,
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THAT PROVIDED BY MILES, AND VERSION GIVEN EMBASSY LAGOS BY UK HICOM THERE (LAGOS 1514 AND 1601). WOULD EXPECT EMBASSY LONDON TO BE IN BEST POSITION TO PUT THIS BRITISH INITIATIVE IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE AND REPORT ON RESULTS TO DATE.

8. THERE ARE ALSO SOME SHARP DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN WHAT SANGUMBA TOLD US ABOUT UNITA'S WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER A BILATERAL DEAL WITH MPLA AND SAVIMBI'S MORE UNCOMPROMISING POSITION EXPRESSED BOTH IN KINSHASA AND IN HIS TALKS WITH US HERE TWO WEEKS AGO. WE UNSURE WHETHER SANGUMBA WAS JUST BEING UNUSUALLY FRANK WITH US OR WHETHER IN THIS INSTANCE HE HAPPENS TO BE SOMEWHAT AHEAD OF SAVIMBI IN CONSIDERING OPTIONS THAT REMAIN OPEN TO UNITA FOR A NON-MILITARY SETTLEMENT. WE HAVE NO WAY YET OF KNOWING WHETHER SAVIMBI HAS ENDORSED IDEA OF INDEPENDENT UNITA NEGOTIATIONS WITH MPLA BUT THERE ARE SEVERAL SEEMINGLY PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS FOR HIM

TO DO SO. THESE INCLUDE:

A. CONTINUED PRECARIOUSNESS OF ROBERTO'S MILITARY AND POLITICAL POSITION, WITH EVEN HELP FROM EUROPEAN MERCENARIES NOW UNCERTAIN FOLLOWING MOBUTU'S ANNOUNCED DECISION BAR THEM FROM ZAIRE;

B. INDICATIONS THAT MOBUTU TOO EXPECTS MPLA TO WIN MILITARY VICTORY AND IS THEREFORE TAKING STEPS TO KEEP OPEN HIS OPTIONS FOR AN EVENTUAL ACCOMMODATION WITH NETO;

C. ANXIETIES ABOUT UNITA'S OWN LONG TERM MILITARY PROSPECTS IN ABSENCE OF FIRM ASSURANCES OF CONTINUING OUTSIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ARMS;

D. AWARENESS THAT NIGERIANS AND TANZANIANS AT UK INSTIGATION MAY NOW BE MOVING TOWARD URGING NETO TO FIND AN ACCOMMODATION AT LEAST WITH UNITA;

E. CALCULATION THAT PRESIDENT KAUNDA AND OTHER MODERATES MIGHT BE WON OVER TO IDEA OF A "COMPROMISE" FORMULA WHICH WOULD MAKE ROOM FOR OTHERS, ESPECIALLY UNITA, IN MPLA GOVERNMENT AS PRICE FOR MPLA ADMISSION INTO OAU (ADDIS ABABA 1515). (WE WILL KNOW BETTER WHAT MIGHT BE KAUNDA'S VIEWS ON THIS POINT AFTER DEBRIEFING PROMISED BY FONMIN BANDA ON FOUR-POWER TALKS IN QUELIMANE THIS PAST WEEKEND.)

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9. FOR THESE REASONS CONCEPT OF A SEPARATE DEAL WITH NETO MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE TO UNITA. IT MAY ALSO BE ONLY ONE WHICH STANDS EVEN FAINTEST PROSPECT OF BEING SOLD TO NETO BY OTHER AFRICANS AS ONLY REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE TO BLOODSHED AND DESTRUCTION THAT COULD CONTINUE FOR YEARS EVEN IF UNITA WERE COMPELLED TO ABANDON CONVENTIONAL WARFARE AND FALL BACK ON GUERRILLA TACTICS.
WILKOWSKI UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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